



Delta Regional Authority Requests for Proposals

For the Delta Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Mapping

1 SECTION 1: OVERVIEW, PURPOSE, AND FRAMEWORK FOR DELTA ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM MAPPING

1.1 Introduction

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) is seeking proposals from qualified academic institution(s), professional(s), or entity(s) to complete a Delta Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Mapping project. The Delta region is comprised of 252 counties and parishes in AL, AR, IL, KY, LA, MO, MS, and TN. This project will identify the entrepreneurial and small business resources for potential and current entrepreneurs and small business owners, both physical and digital. The final product will be a comprehensive map of resources and a report on those resources, on both a regional and individual state levels, including the identification of strengths and weaknesses of the ecosystem to be used by DRA to guide entrepreneurs and small business owners.

The intent of the project is to identify the resources available to entrepreneurs and small business owners in the eight-state region and how they align with the [Small Business and Entrepreneurship Policy Framework \(SBE Framework\)](#). Research should be focused on, but not limited to:

- Developing a pipeline of educated and skilled entrepreneurs;
- Cultivating technology exchange and innovation;
- Improving access to capital;
- Promoting awareness and advancing market opportunities; and
- Optimizing the regulatory environment.

All costs of preparation of responses to this Request for Proposal (RFP) are the sole responsibility of responders and DRA will not be obligated to reimburse any of such costs.

The DRA Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Mapping Initiative aims to be a resource to form new entrepreneurship and small business policy, adjust or uphold current entrepreneurship and small business policy, and serve as a guide for entrepreneurship and small business support organizations to develop new programming to address the gaps in the ecosystem.

The deadline for submittal of proposals is 5:00 PM, Central Time, June 3, 2016.

Priority consideration will be given to institutions within the 252 counties and parishes of the [DRA footprint](#) and those institutions participating in the Delta Research Consortium.

1.2 Requests for Proposals

DRA invites proposals from qualified entities and desires to obtain fixed price proposals to:

- A. Complete the Scope of Services set forth in Section 2 below, and
- B. Based on those Services, prepare a comprehensive list of the entrepreneurial and small business resources of the DRA footprint, including gaps in service delivery and strategies to address those inadequacies. The respondent shall also create a budget for the entire project including any due dates, reports, milestones, etc.

Responding entities should have significant experience in entrepreneurship, small business, and preparing strategic implementation documents.

1.3 Eligibility

DRA is soliciting competitive proposals because it has determined that this process best serves the needs and interest of the DRA and the public. No institution or person shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, citizenship status, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, age, weight, religion, creed, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran status, political affiliation, or any other factor protected by law in consideration for an award issued pursuant to this RFP. DRA is committed to the principles of equal opportunity and the elimination of all vestiges of discriminatory practices that might exist.

Priority consideration will be given to institutions within the 252 counties and parishes of the [DRA footprint](#) and those participating in the Delta Research Consortium.

1.4 General Guidelines for Proposals

All proposals must be received by mail by June 3, 2016 by 5:00 pm CST. Proposals should adhere to the following guidelines:

A successful proposal:

- Will be 20 pages or fewer in length.
- Will be submitted by a professional or entity with significant experience in entrepreneurship, small business, and preparing strategic implementation documents.
- Will include a detailed outline and plan of action and will incorporate factors as directed in section 2 (scope of work guidelines) and will include a response to all items listed in section 3 (technical proposal guidelines).

2 SECTION 2: SCOPE OF WORK GUIDELINES

The project consists of furnishing all labor, materials, equipment, tools, supervision and travel necessary to complete the following tasks:

- A. Create an ecosystem map that depicts activity and assets of entrepreneurial and small business resources both on a regional and individual (8) state level;
- B. Identify gaps in entrepreneurial and small business resources;
- C. Synthesize entrepreneurship and small business trends and best practices from within and outside the Delta region;
- D. Conduct interviews with invested thought leaders and stakeholders regarding opportunity areas, barriers and challenges, needs, and best practices;
- E. Develop shared guiding principles for the DRA footprint in building and accessing entrepreneurial and small business resources (define common ground across stakeholders);
- F. Synthesize ecosystem map, trends, best practices, interview insights and guiding principles as the baseline for ideating around entrepreneurship resources;
- G. Identify pipeline pathways for DRA residents to participate in entrepreneurship and small business education;
- H. Build an implementation roadmap of short, medium, and long-term entrepreneurship and small business education and development platforms along with needed partners, gaps, and ownership, creating a participatory process to identify new pathways;
- I. Identify policy barriers to the tenants of the SBE Framework with estimation of lost economic opportunity and humanized with real-life stories and experiences;
- J. Determine appropriate socio-economic and environmental metrics, outcomes and goals for assessing sustainable impact; and
- K. Outline a platform for sharing information, reporting and regional opportunities while protecting data privacy.

3 SECTION 3: TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

3.1 Requirements for Technical Proposal

The Proposal should include the information requested below:

- Transmittal Letter
- Table of Contents
- Executive summary summarizing the proposal;
- Respondent's Background;
- Corporation's/Organization's Background;
- Letters of Recommendation and Reference;
- Respondent's Experience and Qualifications;

- Technical Approach to Scope of Work (a description of the work program including a description of deliverables and activities);
- Work Plan, Timeline of Deliveries and Performance, and Budget;
 - Schedule of billing rates and a specific “not to exceed” capped fee including associated fees (i.e. printing costs, attendance at meetings, travel). A requested payment schedule should accompany the work schedule; and

The length of the Proposal should be 20 pages or less and should be readable and actionable by a range of stakeholders. Suggestions for additional scope of services and the pricing therefor are encouraged but should be provided separately from the primary Proposal.

3.2 Transmittal Letter

The transmittal letter must be signed by an individual authorized to legally bind the respondent. This letter must include:

- A statement indicating that the respondent is a corporation or other legal entity, including tax identification number on IRS Form W-9;
- A statement that the respondent does not discriminate in its employment practices on the grounds of race, color, citizenship status, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, age, weight, religion, creed, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran status, political affiliation, or any other factor protected by law;
- A statement that no attempt has been made or will be made by the respondent to persuade any other person or firm to submit or not to submit a bid;
- A statement that the respondent has read, understands and agrees to all provisions of this RFP without qualification;
- A statement identifying that all amendments to this RFP issued by DRA have been received by the respondent. If no amendments have been received, a statement that the proposal will meet the requirements set forth in the RFP.

If the proposal deviates from the detailed requirements of this RFP, the transmittal letter must identify and explain these deviations. DRA reserves the right to reject any proposal containing such deviations or to require modifications before acceptance.

3.3 Table of Contents

The respondent shall include a table of contents for the technical proposal. This table shall contain section headings and subheadings along with corresponding page numbers.

3.4 Executive Summary

The executive summary shall condense and summarize the contents of the technical proposal to provide the proposal evaluators with a broad and clear understanding of the entire proposal.

3.5 Respondent's Background

This section of the proposal shall contain information regarding the respondent's corporate background including size and resources, financial standing, involvement in litigation, and references. Also, please include highlights enumerating experience with projects similar to the ones presented in this RFP.

3.6 Corporation's Background

The respondent shall provide background information on the respondent's organization, including the following items:

- Date established,
- Ownership (whether public, partnership, subsidiary, or specified other),
- Total number of employees, and
- Number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) employees engaged in similar contracts.

3.7 Letters of Recommendation and References

Each respondent shall submit a list of three recent professional references (within the last three years) and three letters of recommendation. Recommendations will be verified, so it is important that the proposal contain current telephone numbers, mailing addresses, and e-mail addresses for all references.

3.8 Respondent's Experience and Qualifications

In this section, the respondent shall include the following information:

- a. Evidence of the respondent's qualifications and credentials in terms of proven successful experience in entrepreneurship and small business;
- b. Evidence of the qualifications and credentials of the respondent in terms of proven successful experience in forming sub-regional strategic coalitions and/or performing strategic planning processes; and
- c. Evidence of the qualifications and credentials of the respondent in terms of proven successful experience in performing regional, state-level and sub-regional research and analysis, particularly in the context of assembling disaggregated data into larger and more-usable groupings.

For each referenced project or contract, the respondent shall provide a description of the work performed, the time period of the project or contract, the contract amount, and a customer reference (including current contact information).

3.9 Project Organization, Staffing, and Supervision

The respondent shall participate in weekly update calls with the Director of Small Business and Entrepreneurship or other designated DRA staff members. Draft deliverables and written updates of project milestones will be submitted on to the Director of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Feedback on milestones and deliverables will be provided within a timely manner. Failure to provide milestones and deliverables for review can result in termination of contract.

The respondent shall include a section in its proposal that details the proposed project organization and staffing. This shall include all proposed personnel by job title and level of supervision.

Respondents shall also identify by name the person they propose for project supervisor (the project supervisor will work on behalf of the contractor in close collaboration with Katie Milligan, Director of Small Business and Entrepreneurship). The project supervisor shall not be changed without prior written approval of the DRA. The respondent shall include a resume or biographical information for the project supervisor, which details how the person is qualified for the position.

The respondent shall provide details of its intended project management and project control methods. These shall clearly explain how the respondent proposes to work in collaboration with the DRA project lead to help manage the project, control project activities, report progress, ensure required staffing, relate and report to the DRA, respond to requests by the DRA and interact and coordinate with other relevant activities.

3.10 Technical Approach to Scope of Work

In this section, the respondent shall clearly describe its approach to the scope of work described throughout this RFP. The focus of the technical approach to the scope of work shall be on future plans for the development and completion of the Delta Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Mapping, not on previous experience.

3.11 Work Plan, Timeline of Deliveries and Performance, and Budget

The respondent shall submit an overall calendar-based work plan that summarizes the work and timeline. The respondent shall also create a budget for the entire project including any due dates, reports, milestones, etc.

The work plan shall illustrate how the respondent plans the activities surrounding the execution of all phases of the development and completion of Delta Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Mapping.

4 SECTION 4: PROCUREMENT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Proposals will be thoroughly evaluated and the contract award shall be made to the responsible respondent whose proposal is determined to be the most advantageous and timely to DRA. DRA reserves the right to reject any and all proposals. DRA reserves the right to award the contract to the respondent best suited to fulfill the contract deliverables. DRA reserves the right to decline to award a contract from this RFP.

4.1 Written Questions

Prospective respondents will have the opportunity to submit written questions via email to clarify any uncertainties that may exist. All questions must be submitted via

email to rfp@dra.gov. Questions must be received by the DRA no later than May 27, 2016. All questions shall be marked "DRA RFP Delta Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Mapping in the email subject line.

A webinar and/or conference call to discuss this RFP will be held on Thursday, May 12, 2016 at 10 am CT. Please see the DRA website www.dra.gov for more information regarding the webinar and/or conference call.

No questions will be accepted via telephone. In order to provide equal treatment of respondents, all questions regarding this RFP shall be submitted and answered in writing via email. Questions submitted must make reference to page, section, paragraph, and line number of RFP if possible. Clearly state the question as it pertains to referenced materials. All questions and corresponding answers will be posted on www.dra.gov/RFP by May 27, 2016.

4.2 Submission of Proposals

The technical proposal shall include a transmittal letter and plans for the delivery of the services required in this RFP. This proposal should be signed by a person legally authorized to bind the respondent.

Seven (7) separate copies of the proposal must be received under sealed cover. The outside cover of the package containing the proposals shall be marked and mailed as follows:

**Attention: Delta Regional Authority
Request for Proposal- Delta Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Mapping
236 Sharkey Avenue, Suite 400
Clarksdale, MS 38614**

Additionally, one electronic copy of the proposal should be emailed to rfp@dra.gov.

ALL PROPOSALS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MAIL NO LATER THAN June 3, 2016, 5:00 PM CST ANY PROPOSAL RECEIVED AFTER THIS DATE AND TIME WILL BE REJECTED.

4.3 Rules of Procurement

To facilitate the procurement of this contract, various rules have been established. They are described in the following paragraphs.

4.4 Incorporation into Contract

Appropriate portions of the successful proposal may be incorporated into the contract and will be a matter of public record subject to disclosure under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C.A. § 552, As Amended By Public Law No. 104-231, 110 Stat. 3048.

DRA will have the right to use all ideas, or adaptations of those ideas, contained in any proposal received in response to this RFP. Selection or rejection of the proposal

will not affect this right.

4.5 Performance Indicators and Performance-Based Contracting

The duration of the contract will be June 27, 2016-June 30, 2017 and may be extended at the sole discretion of the DRA.

The contractor must comply with all statutes, regulations, codes, ordinances, and licensure or certification requirements applicable to the contractor or to the contractor's agents and employees, and to the subject matter of the contract. Failure to comply shall be deemed inadequate performance.

Performance evaluations shall be conducted prior to the completion of the contract as necessary to determine if the contractor's performance is adequate. In addition, a performance evaluation shall be conducted as soon as practical after the contract performance is completed. Final payment shall not be made unless and until a performance evaluation evidencing adequate performance is submitted.

Some examples of the contract program deliverables and performance indicators are included in this RFP. Other deliverables and performance indicators may be added during the contract process.

4.6 Terms and Conditions

DRA shall not, under any circumstances, be responsible for any cost, or expenses associated with this proposal including, but not limited to, research, investigation, development, preparation, duplication, production, collation, packaging, delivery, transmittal, or presentation of the proposal or any related information, data documentation and material. All costs and expenses incurred by the respondent in connection with this proposal submittal shall be the sole responsibility of the respondent.

The respondent is prohibited from making multiple proposals.

DRA may withdraw or cancel this RFP any time prior to the award of a contract. DRA may amend this RFP by issuing a notice of amendment prior to the opening of proposals. In unusual circumstances, DRA may postpone a proposal opening in order to give sufficient time to respond to an amendment.

Costs for developing any proposal will be the sole responsibility of the respondent whether or not any award results from this solicitation. DRA will not provide reimbursement for such costs.

DRA reserves the right to request necessary amendments, reject any or all proposals received, or cancel this RFP, according to the best interest of DRA. DRA also reserves the right to waive minor irregularities in proposals provided such action is in the best interest of DRA.

Where DRA may waive minor irregularities, such waiver shall in no way modify the RFP requirements or excuse the respondent from full compliance with the RFP specifications and other contract requirements if the respondent is awarded the contract.

Institutions must warrant that no sums or anything of value has been or will be paid directly or indirectly to any officer or employee of DRA such as wages, compensation, or gifts in exchange for acting as officer, agent, employee, subcontractor, or consultant to the institutions in connection with any work compensated or performed.

DRA cannot and does not make any representations or warranties with regard to the information, data, documentation, and material conveyed in this RFP or otherwise provided by DRA. Institutions shall conduct their own independent investigations and analysis and make their own assessments, judgments, and decisions regarding this opportunity.

Some of the contents of this RFP and the response submitted may be incorporated by reference in any final contract resulting from this RFP.

The contract created as a result of this RFP and the accepted response will be made under, and shall be governed by, and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Mississippi.

5 SECTION 5: EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated by a select review panel and DRA staff and judged based on the following criteria:

- Thoroughness and understanding of the tasks to be completed;
- Background and experience in projects similar to the Proposal;
- Staff expertise and overall experience of personnel assigned to the work;
- Time required to accomplish the requested services;
- Responsiveness to requirements of the project;
- Cost; and
- Such other factors as DRA shall determine.

The stated criteria may be supplemented, weighted or revised at the sole discretion of DRA.